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series. The text and tables fill thirty pages of printed matter. Each of the 63 plates contains from three to many individuals, so that it is difficult to find where the author has neglected or omitted aught.

O. T. MASON.

The Decorative Art of the Amur Tribes. By BERTHOLD LAUFER.
(Publications of the Jesup North Pacific Expedition: Memoirs of
the American Museum of Natural History, vol. VII, number 1.)
New York: 1902. 86 pp., 33 plates, 24 figures, 4°.

This monograph, like all the memoirs of the Jesup North Pacific Expedition, consists of the presentation of entirely new material. Sumptuously illustrated with 250 drawings, it deals with the decorative art, which is practically all the art, of the Gold, Gilyak, Orochon, and other tribes of the Amur region, including the Ainu. More articles of the Gold are described than all the other tribes together. Various arts are represented—carving in relief, ornamental painting, cutting of patterns in birch-bark and paper, and especially embroidering. A great variety of decorated objects are treated of, such as eye-protectors, mittens, spears, baskets, coats, and spoons.

Dr Laufer finds that there has been a strong Chinese influence on the art of the Amur country. Nothing, however, is actually known as to the history of the art-relations of the two regions. Dr Laufer's attitude on this matter is very conservative. He concludes that the art of the Amur tribes is old and deeply rooted, though its basis undeniably rests in China. He holds that the art is not an importation *en masse* from China, but must have had for its *conditio sine qua non* a congeniality in the minds of the two peoples; and that probably Chinese art was gradually absorbed and assimilated by the Amur tribes much as classic art was by the Europeans of the Renaissance.

The bulk of the book consists of a reproduction in illustrations of a large number of specimens of this art, and of an analysis in the text of the ornamental forms so shown. This analysis is carried out with great detail and much accuracy; it is so undeniably thorough as to make tedious reading to any one not specifically interested in problems of ornamentation. This care and thoroughness of analysis, however, give the book its value, for in the interpretation of decorative forms, superficial fancy has such an appalling opportunity that it is the great danger of study of this kind, and the condemning fault of much that has been published. Dr Laufer's analysis, in addition to being marked by caution and good sense, has the inestimable advantage of being founded on that of the natives.

The art of the Amur tribes is essentially ornamental. Its character is, to use the author's expression, formative, not realistic. Chinese art is largely emblematic or symbolic, but of this quality little has been adopted by the Gold. Chinese symbolic patterns are imitated without their symbolism being known. The decorative nature of the art is shown most decisively by the very extensive use of the cock, an animal that plays no part whatever in the mythology or daily life of any of the tribes of the region, and which by some of them has never even been seen; their knowledge of it, and their use of it in art, are due to Chinese influence.

The variety of degrees of conventionalization with which the cock and the fish, the two most important objects of representation in Amur art, are employed, and the way in which these decorative motives are used and abused and adapted to the purposes of decorative art expression, are shown very fully and convincingly in the course of the volume. The difference between the several conventionalizations of the same animal occurring on one object is sometimes very remarkable, and must be set down as one of the salient characteristics of the art. Such fully gradated series of cocks and fishes, as are illustrated, for instance, in figure 1 of plate xxx,—from those that are simply but quite effectively realistic, through others which the author's careful analysis and feeling for the spirit of the art make visible, to those forms, finally, where even his explanations end in a declaration of *non possumus*—are very unusual in primitive art. The cause for these various degrees of conventionalization the author does not find to be a gradual and progressive crystallization of originally realistic non-decorative designs. An influence of technique or material seems out of the question because the different conventionalizations are sometimes found together on the same object; and the author does not even consider this possibility. He wisely attributes this variety of degrees of conventionalization to the creative decorative spirit, or, as he calls it, the "inward impulse to create new [ornamental] forms."

His explanation of the Amur preference for the cock and the fish as decorative motives is at bottom the same: the cock and the fish are peculiarly available and adaptable ornamentally. "These particular animals have an extremely ornamental character because of the great permutations of their graceful motions, and thus lend themselves admirably to the spirit which strives after beauty of form." ("Form," here as elsewhere in the volume, is to be taken as equivalent to "decorative form.")

This explanation, however, does not seem to be sufficient. Another causal factor is required: the nature and spirit of Chinese and

Amur art. The cock and the fish unquestionably were extremely available to this art; but it is too much to say absolutely that their availability is the cause of their prominence in it, for they were, *per se*, equally available to European decorative art, which did not take them up and use them to any extent. An analogous case is the fleur-de-lys. Finding its origin (partial if not ultimate) in heraldic symbolism, its wide ornamental employment in European civilization today is due not so much to any significance as to inherent ornamental availability; but to allege this as the sole cause of its use would be obviously insufficient, for were the character of European art other than it happens to be, the fleur-de-lys would not have been so adaptable and available an ornament. The triskeles and the rosette both have great ornamental possibilities, yet the art of one culture uses only one of them and the art of another only the other to any considerable extent.

A point of general bearing that is brought out in the conclusion, is the essential and necessary connection between conventionalized ornamentation on the one hand, and the forms of nature on the other. A fish "would never have been drawn in spiral form, would never have clung to a spiral, without a foundation of fact." This clinging of the most purely decorative ("formal") arts to a certain amount of realism, is an unexplained and perhaps unexplainable fact, but one that occurs the world over and should never be forgotten in the study of ornamentation.

Two faults of omission can be found with the paper. The internal geographical relations of the art are nowhere made clear, and it is not even stated, except incidentally and incompletely, whether, and to what extent, the technique of the various tribes differs. Another point on which more clearness would have been desirable is as to the precise degree to which the explanations of ornaments that are given belong respectively to the author and to the natives.

Altogether Dr Laufer's volume is a valuable contribution both to the ethnography of the Amur region and to the general study of ornamentation.

A. L. KROEBER.